

[158 cont.]

231 logs with the floor slightly raised by means of logs laid horizontally
343 on the ground. (Photo 116, Plate 27.) Naturally, this pen for the animals is no more frequently cleaned than is the inside of the house, with the result that the liquid manure and the excrement soon form nauseous seas which it is necessary to cross painfully in order to reach the house.

The "Méo" have excellent little horses (average height -- about
291 1.20 meters, like the Chinese or Tonkinese horses) sturdy, sensible, very handy, and very sure-footed. These horses are never groomed, are fed with a little grass (a special grass called "ma-tsao" or horse's grass), with bamboo leaves and a few handfuls of maize. They gen-
[343]erally are tied under a little lean-to resting against the house.

The "Méo-" have a special breed of white dogs, with silky and very thick hair of medium length.

The fowls (hens, guinea hens, ducks, and so on) roam at
liberty around the house during the day and roost at night in a coop
[343] usually located above or near to the stable. The wildcats, which
[136] are numerous in the mountains of Upper Tonkin, frequently do fright-
ful slaughter among the "Méo" poultry.

In view of their spirit of independence, the "Méo" most often
361 live off by themselves, in groups of five or six cabins, and only very seldom form sizeable settlements. However, in the region of Pha - Long - Pakha, where the "Méo" group forms the majority of the population, several "Méo" villages exist which number from twenty to thirty cabins. Be that as it may, the "Méo" village is always perched very near to the summits of the mountains, at the foot of the crags; difficult mule-trails with very abrupt slopes permit access to these villages; still the climb on foot is infinitely preferable to the trip on horseback.

("Méo" houses appear in the following photographs: 346, Plate 36; 347, Plate 41; 445, Plate 38; 135, Plate 43. The last three show villages.)

361 In the hamlets and villages of the "Méo," the houses are built
364 according to the inclination of the occupants, without thought of alignment or of streets, the enclosures for the animals close to the dwelling houses. Despite the open air and the sun which bathe the

[158 cont.]

361 "Méo" villages, the hygienic conditions in them are questionable
364 enough, especially during the winter when the temperature frequently
drops [159] below freezing. The "Méo" spend the days and the
nights of winter squatting or sleeping about the kitchen hearth and
neglect to put any extra clothing on when they go outdoors. It is
164 clear that under these conditions the pulmonary maladies which
have already been spoken of are extremely frequent and that they
cause real havoc among the old people and the young children.

Smallpox frequently rages among the "Méo," but like all
primitive people who are not poisoned by the abuse of medicines
[147] for generations, they react marvelously to the simplest remedies.
In 1911, a serious epidemic of smallpox ravaged a very large vil-
[751] lage in the region of Pha-Long, causing five or six deaths daily. All
the inhabitants were vaccinated the same day, old and young, healthy
persons or those already attacked. From that moment, no further
deaths occurred.

262 Maize is the basic food of the "Méo." It is boiled, steamed,
[252] or parched, or reduced to meal in order to be eaten in the form
of cakes. The "Méo" also cultivate mountain rice, but like the
243 "Man," they are coming more and more to cultivate permanent
irrigated rice fields, the working of which is easier and more re-
munerative. To this end they have taken over as much as possible
of the favorable terrain, valley bottoms or sides of hillocks on which
water may be brought by a simple canalization, and have laid out
these areas into terraced rice fields where they often successively
[249] cultivate rice and opium. (See photos 135 and 428, Plate 43, show-
ing the rice fields after the harvest, and photo 184, Plate 41, which
shows a large rice field used for the cultivation of opium, the latter
photo taken March 31, 1912.)

262 Aside from maize and rice, the "Méo" eat buckwheat and many
[252] vegetables, which they cook in water with a little salt: potatoes,
string beans, peas, beans, cucumbers, turnips, eggplants, pumpkins,
and so on. The use of meat (fowl, game, domestic animals) is re-
served for ceremonies and banquets, which the "Méo" never miss a
chance for. They never eat horseflesh.

/229/

Chapter 11

Medicine

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[364] Hygienic conditions in the Meau villages are very unsatisfactory. The children in particular are literally encrusted with dirt. Even the adults seldom wash themselves. To do so they take some water in the hollow of the hand and put a little over the face or wipe the face with a damp piece of clothing. Since, however, articles of clothing, too, are rarely washed, this procedure is quite ineffective.

[296] Cleaning the body or clothing with anything but water is unknown; neither sand nor fat, oil, smoke, or fire is used. Marabail (1), too, states that the Meau are dirty and that their

1. Pages 463 and 451.

[312] clothing stinks, because they never wash. He accounts for this by saying that water is scarce, but this certainly is not true for Farther India!

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[165] People are sometimes covered with crusts of dirt into which perspiration cuts light streaks. Flies and other insects hatch out their eggs in the rubbish heaps. The relatively good health of the people stands in peculiar contrast to this. Child mortality is very high, but it is offset by the high fertility. Anyone who in childhood was able to survive the many epidemics and sicknesses that befall the little ones shows considerable resistance to sickness as an adult.

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[356]
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[231] The houses of the Meau are swept, to be sure, but the refuse is thrown beside the dwelling. Pigs and dogs search for their food in the rubbish heaps. /230/ There are no toilets (see the chapter, "Settlement and House Construction"). The feces of the animals defile the dwellings and village squares and, during the dry season, often form a whole layer which is washed away only by the downpours of the rainy season. Since the Meau villages are built on slopes, the violent showers take care of this needed cleaning very thoroughly. After tropical thunderstorms masses of water stream between the houses, which are protected by ditches, and wash away all the refuse.

/230 cont. /

- 364 Most authors who had an opportunity to visit the Meau in their villages stress this lack of hygiene. Lajonquière (1), for instance,

1. II, 306.

also describes the condition of the area between the dwellings and the stables: "The ground has become bottomless from the treading of the domestic animals. Filth accumulates and mixes with the earth, sometimes to a depth of 80 centimeters or a meter. In order to enter the house of the Meau chief in the region of Pakha... one of the wealthiest in the area, one had to cross a sea of filth seven to eight meters wide completely surrounding it. There were not only feces of the animals, but waste water from the kitchen and refuse of all kinds were thrown even directly in front of the door. The tree trunks in the midst of it did not permit one to cross this seat of infection without danger of slipping." The same author (2) also emphasizes the

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2. Page 304.

nauseating dirt which clings to all the eating utensils and kitchen implements. Abadie (3) in similar words confirms the conditions

3. Page 157.

in the villages described by Lajonquière.

Savina (4), too, discusses these conditions: "All their lives

4. II, p. 205.

[609] they drink fresh water and breathe clean air. Whenever a
[356] stranger comes, the house is swept clean. All the children go
[291] naked. When they become ill, they are smeared with mud. The
[757] lack of hygiene takes its toll in many sicknesses: rheumatism,
[164] bronchitis, fever, abscesses, mange, and herpes."

MiaoAES

/268 cont./

If needed,

342 sleeping rooms, too, are often built on. The basic form of the
[573] houses and the roofs is always the same, however. A pigsty
[417] and a chicken coop also belong to each house, whereas cattle
[231] are usually kept by only a few families.

356 Cleanliness is a relative idea. In comparison with the
scrupulously clean houses of the Lao, the dwellings of the Meau
certainly leave much to be desired. At many houses the refuse
lies in front of the door for days before it is removed. In other
places one sees the women busy at sweeping the house and wash-
ing the dishes regularly. Even on important festive days the
appearance of the house and yard does not change much. One
recognizes by the old rotten trash covered with soot and dirt
until it is beyond recognition, which often fills up the houses,
that the Meau women /269/ feel no need to create order. To
be sure, each move of the village provides an opportunity for
it, and this must suffice. There are no toilets. Places outside
the village are sought at random and are well known by the dogs
and pigs, since they devour all the excrement with amazing
thoroughness and thus perform valuable sanitary service.

342 The ground plan, sketch, cross-section, and drawing of
the framework of the chief's house (Figs. 63, 64, 65, and 66)
and of the dwelling house (Figs. 67, 68, 69 and 70) with their
respective legends indicate the size, construction, and shape of
the dwellings without anything more, so I have only a little to
add.

[Figures appear on pp 371-377,
Text continues on p 378]